

II.—*In a Madman's Embrace.*

BY H. KEMBLE.

An old West Indian planter relates his most thrilling experience, and provides actual photographs to illustrate the narrative. The alarm, the headlong pursuit down the line on a truck, the discovery of the madman, and the deadly struggle.



MR. H. KEMBLE.

From a Photo. by Ernest Ravastro, Kingston.

SOME years ago I was engaged in banana planting on an estate in one of the West Indian Islands—Portland, Jamaica, to be precise. The owner of this and other properties, a Mr. Espent, had just laid down a tramway from Spring Garden, the property on which he lived on the sea-shore, to Chepstow, another estate lately put under cultivation seven miles inland. It was a wonderful piece of engineering work, and few men would have undertaken it in face of the difficulties that were to be contended against.

The line started from a wharf on Spring Garden and ran for about a mile through fields of sugar-cane, when it came to a river, which it followed for the rest of the distance (about six miles), sometimes along an embankment which had to be built up, and sometimes on solid rock, which had to be cut down some 90ft. At other times the line ran on an earthy bed cut out of the side of the

hill, with the outer rail, in many places, not a foot from the side, where there was a sheer drop of 60ft. It crossed another river, which emptied itself into the first, by a trestle bridge, and spanned several gullies by small bridges with unprotected sides. The remains of trucks which had jumped the rails at these places were usually found somewhere about the mouth of the river.

Trucks ran backwards and forwards on this line, bringing down sugar-cane, fruit, lumber, etc., and, for the most part, they went up empty. They were drawn up by mules, and were fitted with powerful brakes, as the decline was pretty steep, and a truck set going from the top came down the line at a truly terrific rate.

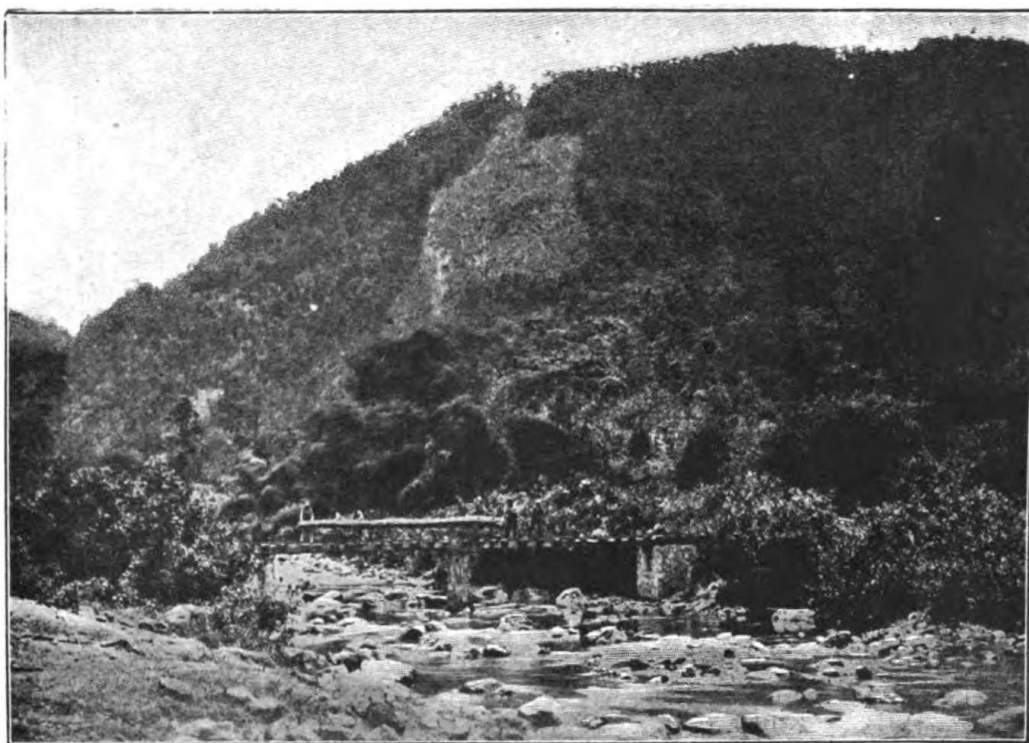
Soon after I had established my cultivation of a hundred acres of bananas, and had a slack time on my hands, the overseer met with a nasty accident on the line which, when he became convalescent, necessitated his being sent home for a change. Mr. Espent being at a loss for someone to take his place, I volunteered my services and, the better to look after the work, I moved into the overseer's house. This house was also tenanted by a Canadian sawyer, whose name I must give here as Laing, and his wife and children, as well as an American who was a cooper by trade, and Carter by name. The two men worked for Mr. Espent, and Mrs. Laing did



From a

A CUTTING THROUGH THE ROCK.

[Photo.]

*From a*

BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER, WITH UNPROTECTED SIDES.

[Photo.

the housekeeping for us. This house was the only one on the property, with the exception of the negro huts and the indentured coolie barracks, and the saw-mills were quite near to the house.

We all had plenty of hard work, mine being nearly all on horseback, and we were always ready to turn in early. I, however, found time every morning for a swim in a deep pool in the river, which considerably improved my swimming and diving powers. This was extremely lucky for me, as it proved later on.

Laing was a queer-tempered man, and very difficult to understand. He could not get on with the negroes at all—he simply hated them; and I often feared he would fall foul of some of them, in which case there would not have been much chance for the nigger, as Laing was an immensely powerful man.

One evening during my usual talk with him he suddenly said he must go down to the saw-mills for something. He went out of the room in his shirt-sleeves and stockinged feet—his usual dress in the evenings. I then turned in, and was asleep in a couple of minutes.

I was suddenly awakened by a loud knocking at my door, and a voice, which I distinguished as Mrs. Laing's, calling me. Slipping on some flannels I went out, and noticed by the light of the candle she held that she looked terribly frightened. "Oh, Mr. Kemble," she said, "my husband has not come in, and he isn't at the saw-mills, for I have been to look."

"Well, I'll go and have a look," I said; "I expect he has gone to see one of the men about some work to be done to-morrow."

I went to the negro houses and the coolie barracks, but he had not been there. Carter then joined me, and together we searched in every place where he could possibly have been, but without success.

Returning to the house we were met by Mrs. Laing, who looked very white, and was

clutching a piece of paper in her hand. She handed it to me, and I read:—

"DEAREST WIFE,—I cannot stand this life any longer. By the time you get this I shall be at the bottom of the sea. God bless you and the children, and forgive me.—EDWARD."

"Where did you find this?" I asked, in astonishment.

"On my dressing-table, partly under the looking-glass," she replied, bursting into tears.

"Bear up, Mrs. Laing," I said, reassuringly; "we will overtake him; meanwhile, you get indoors, and we will soon bring him back. Come on, Carter, help me to get a truck."

The only way to the sea, except by going miles round, was by the tram-line, so that I had every hope of being in time by using a truck, which I knew he had not done. We had to take a small iron trolley, with no brake, as the large trucks were switched off some distance from the house, and were all loaded up ready for going down in the morning. Greasing the wheels well, we shoved off into the darkness.

Never shall I forget that headlong ride. Down we rushed through pitch darkness, with the river roaring below on the cruel rocks which we could imagine, although we could not see. No brake had we to stop the truck with should anything come in our way, such as a stone, or a stray animal, or one of the many obstacles which we knew often slipped down on to the line. Indeed, we could not have seen it if anything had been there. Fancying every second



From a] THE SAW-MILLS.—THE MAN ON THE RIGHT WITH THE LONG BEARD IS THE MADMAN.

[Photo.

we were into something, our hearts were in our mouths when, every now and then, the wheels of the truck struck a stone and the whole crazy flying conveyance jumped—luckily back on to the rails again. It was a terrible ride, indeed, but fortunately did not last long. We were down in fifteen minutes, though it had seemed an hour. The last mile being on the level, we had slowed down considerably by the time we reached the overseer's house at Spring Garden, where we managed to jump off safely. The overseer was staying at the time in what we called the "Great House," where Mr. Espent himself lived, but the latter was away in the hills with his family. On making inquiries at the overseer's house I found that Laing *had* been there some minutes before—hatless, coatless, and bootless, but he seemed quite natural in his manner. He had asked for paper and written a letter to Mr. Garnett, the overseer, to be given him in the morning, and had then gone out again. Seizing the letter, I rushed up to the Great House and found Mr. Garnett on the steps. He had heard the noise made by our truck coming down, and had come out to see what was the matter. Opening the letter, he read: "DEAR GARNETT,—I have made up my mind to drown myself. I shall have done it

before you get this. Will you see after the wife and children, and do all that is necessary to get them back home?—LAING."

Garnett, Carter, and I, with some coolies to help us, were soon at work searching along the sea-shore. Carter and I went to the left and followed the shore as far as we could get; then we joined Garnett and the coolies, who had worked towards the mouth of the river on the right.

When we reached the river we stopped to hold a consultation on the bank, which was here steep, with a deep pool below. I thought I heard a noise in some bushes near, and stooped down to peer into them. Suddenly a dark form started up before me. Without a word the mysterious and startling figure seized me round the body in a grip of iron. Then a jump and a splash, and we were both in the river.

I realized in a minute that I was in the hands of a madman, who meant to drown me. For the first second I struggled. Then I remained calm, thinking that I should require all my breath. I began wondering who would hold out longest, and, if *he* lost consciousness first, would he let go his grip? I knew he did not swim; I, on the other hand, was an adept at the art. This gave me reason to hope that I

should be able to hold out longer than he. But I was only too well aware that one cannot take measures against all that a madman is capable of. I was so far entirely in his power. He held me very tight, and for some minutes we rolled over and over in this fashion in the water. Once we touched bottom, and I struggled to keep my presence of mind and to resist the sickening feeling of being lost. The madman's grip did not relax, and we rose together again. I felt lighter in heart and began to hope. Would he get tired and let me go? Over and over we rolled again; then we brushed against a rock with a dull thud and a thrill of pain. Next moment all became dark. I had lost consciousness.

When I came to myself, I was lying on the bank, with Garnett and Carter hanging over me. Laing himself was lying next to me.

"How do you feel?" asked Garnett.

"Oh, I dunno," I murmured.

A minute later, up drove the doctor with the coolie who had been sent for him. After a brief examination of me he gave me a sip of brandy and said I would do all right. Then he turned his attention to Laing. Having examined him, he said to Garnett, "You had better take Kemble to your house in my trap and get him to bed, and by the time you return I think I shall have Laing brought round." I was accordingly helped into the buggy and driven off. On arriving at the house I was put to bed, and was asleep in no time.

Next morning I was not much the worse for my nocturnal struggle with my would-be

murderer. Laing, however, was very ill with brain fever. He was unconscious for three weeks, and had to be carefully watched and attended to all the time. However, careful nursing by his wife and the skilful treatment of the doctor brought him round again.

It was decided that the sawyer had better return to his home in Canada, and just before he and his family started he alluded to that dreadful night.

He said he hardly remembered going down to Spring Garden, although it must have been a very painful walk in his bootless state; but he remembered wading into the sea up to his waist, when he heard his children calling him distinctly. He turned back and was wandering along the bank, when he heard voices, and then a form peered into the bush behind which he was crouching. Thinking it was a nigger, in the darkness, a sudden frenzy seized him, and he clasped his supposed assailant round the body and jumped into the river, hoping to drown the detested darkie and himself too. He remembered no more.

I learnt that Garnett and Carter had run down below the pool where it got shallow, and had caught us as we were brought down by the stream.

In comparing notes afterwards, Mrs. Laing said the children had awakened and called out for their father just about the time that Laing had fancied he heard them.

What I could never make out was why Laing chose the sea, when he could have ended his existence at dozens of places he passed on his way down the tram-line.

III.—*My Short Cut Up the Cliffs.*

BY B. DE SALES LA TERRIERE, CAPTAIN LATE 18TH HUSSARS.

A sprightly and amusing narrative of the serio-comic dilemma in which Captain La Terriere found himself. Landing at the cliff foot to escape mal-de-mer, he found he could get neither up nor down. His frantic efforts and exciting rescue.

THE spring of the Jubilee Year, 1887, found me quartered at that delightfully clean and sweet-smelling "port of pigs," the gay city of Waterford.

I was in command of a squadron of my regiment, Her Majesty's 18th Hussars, and after a particularly sleety, sloppy winter, in which nothing much in the way of soldiering could be done (except keeping the old troop horses in exercise), the time came for the usual annual course of musketry to be got through.

I'm afraid we—the fraternity of "the jaunty cap and the jingling spur"—only looked upon the musketry course as a thing to be "got

through," and that as quickly as possible, as the present and most proper interest in that branch of a cavalryman's duties was then scarcely felt.

However, this particular course was destined to impress itself pretty considerably upon my memory before I'd done with it. There were no rifle ranges at Waterford, and the custom was for one of the two troops quartered there to be sent temporarily to Duncannon Fort, some ten or twelve miles down the river on the Wexford side, there to complete its course of firing, and then to be succeeded by the other troop for the same purpose.

I myself, as commanding the detachment at

Waterford, had a certain amount of business and routine work at Waterford, while at the same time I had to superintend the firing at Duncannon. Or, in other words, I had to perform the trick of that good old bird of Sir Boyle Roche's, and be in two places at once.

Quite easy when you try! I did it in this way. I used to ride down in the morning to a village on the Waterford side of the river, a mile or two above Duncannon, where, by arrangement with the most obliging of Coastguard officers, a boat, manned by three bluejackets, met me, and took me down the river and across to the little jetty of the fort. When the firing was finished, there was nothing to keep me at Duncannon, and so I returned the same way I had come, and finished my day's work at Waterford.

Now, the estuary at Passage, as the village on the Waterford side is called, was about two miles wide, and capable of holding a tidy "sea" on occasions; but, luckily for me and my journeys to and fro, the weather up till now had been very calm.

One morning, however, on arrival, I found a dead head-wind blowing up the river, and a five-knot tide doing all it knew to help out the wind. I happened to be very late that morning, having been kept at Waterford over some business or other, and didn't at all relish being further delayed by the long beat which we should have to make against wind and tide to reach the fort.

I should say that while the shore on the Waterford side slopes down to the estuary, that on the Wexford side rises sheer from the water in dull red cliffs 200ft. or 300ft. high, with here and there falls of shale and earth reaching in rugged steps to the top. We had made about two beats across the river, and made very little progress; the time for my musketry parade was already past, and (tell it not!) the "popples" of the sea was beginning to make me feel it was quite time I was landed somewhere.

As we neared the shore I had a good look at it, and it seemed to me that in places where the rubbish and shale reached from the top of the cliffs to the bottom, in more or less of a slope, steep though it might be, there oughtn't to be anything to prevent a man of ordinary activity from climbing up to the top.

Anyhow, I determined to have a try. I soon spied a place that seemed just the spot I wanted, where the shale, *looking up* at it, seemed to

reach right to the top; and beyond a stiff climb it seemed to present no difficulties. Concealing my growing "qualms," I told the "sailor-men" that, as I was in a great hurry and late for my parade, I thought that if they would land me on the spot I had selected, I could make my way to the top, and reach Duncannon quicker than I could by beating down the river.

Delighted to get their morning's work done and back to their comfortable quarters, they landed me on some slippery rocks at the bottom of the cliff, and then, with a "good morning," they shoved off, and trimmed their lug-sail for a run home.

Down to the water's edge came the shale, pretty steep, certainly, but nothing to be afraid of, though I found that a tight frock-coat, gold-laced pantaloons, and jack-boots and spurs was hardly a first-class cliff-climbing kit.

I started away, and by zig-zagging a bit now and then, I was getting on finely. The top of the cliff seemed close at hand when, good heavens! *the slope of the shale suddenly gave out*, and I found myself confronted with, not even a smooth face to the cliff, but *an absolute overhang* of some 6ft. or 7ft. sheer!

A very few moments' examination showed me that to reach the top that way was just an impossibility, and I decided to go down the



"I WAVED MY HANDKERCHIEF."

way I came up and start at a fresh place. Quite easy to settle, but—loose shale to climb *up* is one thing, and loose shale to climb *down* is another thing.

I hadn't gone three steps in a downward direction before I felt the *whole slope was on the move!*

I was perfectly powerless to stop it, and before you could say "knife," I was dashing down with the rubbish, and only too glad when I found myself brought up against a very nasty, prickly blackthorn bush, that had managed to establish itself on the face of the cliff.

Here was a jolly predicament! I couldn't possibly reach the top, and to embark on the slippery, shifting shale again meant arriving on the ragged rocks below at a pace that would mean "pieces," and no more parades for me! What was I to do? On that wild bit of coast it was no good expecting "someone" to come and help me out of the mess, and I was at least a mile and a half from the fort, which was the nearest inhabited house. I supposed I *must* get down. I tried. Result: a rattle of stones, and "wump," I'm brought up again by a big projecting stone!

Then I gave up the idea of trying to climb either up or down, and concentrated my energies in an effort to attract the notice of the coastguardsmen, who had just hauled up their boat on the other side of the river. I began to shout (Lord, how I did yell!) and waved my handkerchief in the hope of being seen. I've got pretty good lungs, and after a bit I saw one of the men come out of their station-house, and then the other two; and a minute later the boat had started "to the rescue."

I wasn't feeling at all comfortable, and every minute expected to feel myself "on the run" again, with the rocks below to bring me up. I tell you I watched that boat's proceedings with considerable attention.

They had to beat down to me, and it seemed a very long time before they arrived. But at last they ran down their sail and shot in just below me. I shouted down and told them the fix I was in, and also that as I couldn't get *down* they'd have to haul me *up*.

They moved off to a place where the ascent was really practicable, and a few minutes after I heard a voice above me on the cliff top. I suppose it was about an

hour from the time I'd started to go up, and as for most of this time I'd been clinging to my stone like a fly to a wall, you may imagine that I was beginning to feel rather cramped.

The only available rope was the boat's painter, and this was looped and let down towards me from above. I say *towards me* advisedly, for it didn't reach the place I was stuck at by several yards. There was nothing for it but to climb up to the rope, and this I did, with several slips on the shifting rubbish, now thoroughly loosened, till I had the end of the loop in my grasp. I wasn't quite out of the wood yet, though!

A loop had been made at the end of the rope, which I passed under my arms, and very thin that rope looked, too, to support a man over some 200ft. of space. Anyhow, it was that or nothing.

As I mentioned before, the top of the cliff, which was principally gravel, and none too firm, *overhung* several feet out of the perpendicular, so I had to let myself go from my foothold and allow myself to be hauled up sheer and clear.

Very odd it felt, I can assure you, spinning round in space, and I didn't seem to go up over



"SPINNING AND BUMPING AGAINST THE CLIFF."

fast, but I was congratulating myself on having nearly got to the end of my difficulties. Anyhow, I had perfect confidence in the ability of the bluejackets to see me through.

I was, I suppose, about a yard from the top, when I heard a shout, "Look out, sir, for God's sake! The cliff's cracking!" and in an instant there was a deluge of mud, shale, and gravel, filling my eyes and mouth with stones, and knocking me half silly, as with a rush like an avalanche a great mass of earth and stones dashed away beneath me, and fell with a mighty crash upon the rocks below, leaving me spinning and bumping against the cliff

I neared the top. It was probably to this plan that we all owed our lives.

The weight and exertions of the foremost man, added to my weight on the rope, had cracked the edge of the cliff where it overhung, and when the crash came, as it did without a moment's warning, he had only just time to shout out to me, and throw himself back to avoid being carried down.

Certainly half of his weight and all mine was thus thrown on the third man—then luckily some yards from the edge—and the odds are that if the rope had not been made fast round his body, certainly two of us must have gone



"HE THREW HIMSELF BACK TO AVOID BEING CARRIED DOWN."

like a sparrow roasting on the end of a bit of worsted!

Till I had collected my wits a bit I quite thought that I was falling too; but I found that the rope was still round me, and I remember seeing a scared face peering down at me and hearing a shout, "Hurrah, boys; he's all right! Haul away on him." I was being drawn up the steep incline that now appeared where the overhang had broken away. A moment or two later I was seized by the arms, and at last stood in safety.

It appeared that of the three men who had come to my rescue, one had stayed with the boat, and of the two who had scaled the cliff, one had made the rope fast round his body, and while his mate hauled on the rope, he "took in the slack" by crawling farther away as

down with the falling earth. If the two men had both been standing hauling *together* close to the edge when the slip occurred, we should *all* have gone to kingdom come for a dead certainty!

But what, you may ask, were my feelings on finding myself panting, and very dirty, but safe, on the top?

Well, I suppose I ought to say that I felt bursting with thankfulness and all sorts of nice sentiments; but in point of fact I can only confess to feeling much as I recollect doing after smoking my first cigar! There you have it!

The next time I attended musketry parade at Duncannon Fort, I chanced delay and *mal-de-mer*, and landed at the jetty like other folks.